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ABSTRACT

This position paper presents two sides of an unsettled issue in high school music education: whether the purpose of music education programs should be the development of individuals as potential user-consumers or as future performers of music. The placement of students into either of the distinct categories presents an acute instructional problem in music. both the school and/or the individual music teacher's philosophy concerning this issue can determine the course of the music curriculum and methods of instruction. As a result, most music education programs fit students into one category without considering the other. In addition to presenting pro and con arguments of the controversy, the paper can serve as a guide for educators who wish to determine the direction and focus of their music programs. Concomitantly, the paper is intended to stimulate observations and aid in the selection of philosophical, curricular, and instructional aspects of a music program. (Author/JR)

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MUSIC: FOR THE PERFORMERS

OR THE POPULATE

by

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ABSTRACT

This position paper presents both sides of a still unsettled issue in high school music education. Should the public school music program develop students as future performers or develop interest, understanding, and appreciation in the general school populous? The paper shows how the school and or the individual music teacher's philosophy concerning this issue can determine the course, the music curriculum and instruction will follow. The paper is not meant to be evaluative in nature but is meant to serve as a guide for educators who wish to determine the direction and focus of their music program. Concomitantly the paper is intended to stimulate observations and focus the readers attention to select philosophical, curricular, and instructional aspects of a music program.

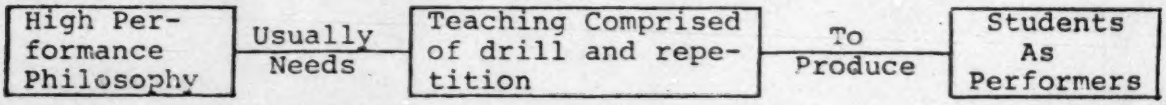
POPULATE

MUSIC: FOR THE PERFORMERS OR THE POPULOUS

Music in itself is a unique subject. It is unique in the sense that it is one of the few disciplines in the curriculum that has enjoyment and pleasure as part of its curricular intention and objectives. It is not only meant to be enjoyed by those who listen and dance (users-consumers), but also gratifying for the performer, who recreates or brings the notes to life (maker-performer). From this rather concise description, one can see that an individual's musical role is primarily limited to that of either user-consumer or performer. The purpose then of a music education program should be the development of individuals as potential users-consumers or performers of music.

The placement of students into the distinct categories of user-consumer and performer presents for music an acute instructional problem. If a program places excessive emphasis on one of the purposes mentioned, the result will be reflected in the curriculum, pedagogy and finally the development of the student. In other words, the school philosophy of music determines the type of curriculum and instruction that will prevail. If, for instance, the school views the music program as being primarily a service organization to provide entertainment and novelty for assemblies, plays, banquets, or civic

functions, obviously the curriculum will be maker or performer oriented. To fulfill this purpose a certain type of instruction will evolve in order to develop students as performers. Such a program would look like this:



More concisely, there is a sequence or progression of events in which the philosophical purpose serves as catalyst. The same would hold true if the school had a nondescript or open-ended philosophy toward music, but the music teacher had a highly performance oriented philosophy. It would probably reflect a curriculum and style of teaching much the same as the one shown above.

Consequently, there appears to be little or no concern for anything unrelated to performance.

The problems of such a program are not always obvious or easily recognized. After all the P.T.A. and civic organizations, which have been served by the performing groups, are pleased by their performance and from their listening can conclude that the students must be receiving a fine music education since they play so well. Realistically, however, they are probably poorly educated in music, but rather trained slavishly well.

My suspected reason for this is that the student's musical experience has probably been so directed and focused by the performer philosophy and purpose, that their learning has been primarily funneled into the psycho-motor domain thus causing severe deficiency in the cognitive and affective areas. In other words, the students are taught to respond to stimulus (play the sounds the notes indicate) without understanding the reason for doing so. The students are being taught much in the same way as Pavlov's dog. They are learning behavior (psycho-motor skill - moving fingers) without the sufficient knowledge (cognitive) that would give their behavior true meaning and understanding and thus develop the affective area. The main reason for this type of development is because of impending performance, time cannot be afforded during a rehearsal to allow for musical comparison and examples which would provide the insight and understanding as to the why of a particular style of playing. To have the students understand the reasons for playing some music and phrases one way, and others an entirely different way would require a different use of time. Time under the existing philosophy cannot be spent in this manner since music has to be learned quickly and flawlessly for critical performance. Teaching music for this end is best accomplished by constant drill and repetition, which usually results in nothing more than rote learning. The educational outcome is, as mentioned earlier, a deficiency in the cognitive and affective areas of development. Hence, the meaning and understanding needed for true

music education is never achieved.

Another negative aspect of the maker-performer music program, is decline of student enjoyment and gratification. For certain the students experience a proud feeling when accepting the applause from an audience-enjoyed performance. However, it is only a matter of time until students come to realize that their input far exceeds their return. The long weeks of rigid drill are not worth the relatively short lived gratification of performance. Certainly as college graduates you know the feeling of submitting yourself to weeks of tedious work on the mere strength of an instructor's promise that you work will have meaning for you sometime in the future. The analogy pretty much conveys the tone and feeling the student in such a music program experiences.

The third point of major contention, is the music itself. The music usually used in performance programs must meet certain criteria of acceptability. In other words, it must be rather legitimate in style, music traditionally viewed as worth playing (overtures, marches, sonatas, etc...?)

It appears this tends to lessen enjoyment and estrange the music program by its failure to recognize and utilize the music current in contemporary society. Studies have shown that integration of contemporary music increases motivation and interest.

The final major shortcoming of this program is that it tends to breed and be directed toward an elite. In other words,

it is not intended or geared for mass student participation. The range of student ability on instruments surely represent the entire gamut from virtuoso to amateur. It would be almost an impossible task to drill and prepare all of these students for precision playing. The result is that students who enjoy playing and learning about music, but cannot achieve the depth of facility needed in the performer oriented program, are not given an opportunity to study music.

The negative aspects of the maker-performer program described, certainly vary from school to school, but only in degree. The essence of its philosophy and purpose still remain the same. (1) Professional-like organization preparing for critical performance with emphasis on psycho-motor training. (2) Music education is not extracted from the music hence the cognitive and affective areas of development are suppressed. (3) Drill and repetition, as well as traditional music, tend to decrease student interest and motivation. (4) The program is not intended for mass participation.

It should not be misconstrued from the preceding discourse that I protest the establishment or the objectives of a fine performing group. I do not oppose nor does the program which I propose discriminate against the training or encouragement of proficient players or elite groups. They must surely be part of any viable program alternative; how else could the profession remain alive and regenerate? The suggested program

would, in addition to this, allow for much broader student participation. This is especially vital when programs are threatened by budget cuts. It is extremely difficult to justify the existence and expense of a program whose participants are only but a fraction of the school population.

Contrasting the program outlined above is one whose purpose would be the education of user-consumers as well as performers. (User-consumers meaning the average lay person who does not intend to make music a career. Performer refers to students who possess more than average ability and interest and thus can potentially choose music as a career.)

The nature of this philosophy, in addition to countermanding the negative traits of the maker-performer philosophy, has positive characteristics within itself. This approach focuses much more attention on the overall development of the individual and tries to provide for a variety of interests. To allow for this, there are usually several playing groups a student can participate in. Besides membership in the large concert band, the student will have a choice of many small ensembles. Examples of these could be folk type, dixieland, rock, stage band, lab band or novelty band. These groups do more than allow students to follow their individual tastes and interests; they expand the curriculum (musical content), and also give each student participating a more important musical role. In other words, in large concert bands, traditional band parts are arranged in skyscraper fashion, with

the most important role given to the first parts and the least important role given to the third parts. This hierachal division of parts definitely favors the first part players. Since over half of the band consists of second and third players, it is not surprising to find low morale due to dissatisfaction and disinterest.

In the small groups mentioned, every part is equally important and the students realize it. This reduces dissatisfaction and increases student enjoyment and gratification.

In this program emphasis on performance is diminished, therefore, the amount of critical performance will decrease. This permits a relaxed rehearsal atmosphere and allows teachers to extract music education (cognitive and affective) from the music.

The third positive aspect is that attention will be distributed between performing (psycho-motor), knowing and feeling (cognitive and affective). Tedious drill and repetition for performance sake will be eliminated.

Finally, the increased number of playing groups allow for more students with a wide range of abilities to take part in learning. As mentioned earlier, if needed, this would undoubtedly strengthen the rationale for the program's future existence.

Certainly it can be said that the two programs described represent the near extremes on the continuum. However, they

are indicative of the educational emphasis and priorities a music program can choose. In order to expose and give the general student populus music education as well as increase the effectiveness of the total music program a philosophy and curriculum which emphasize wide student participation is essential.